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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0526  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3570  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1388  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1255  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 1824  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2372

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 000403

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/31/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [AJ](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: FM MEREDOV, BRIEFLY, TERSELY

REF: A. ASHGABAT 0396

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 0295

[1](#)C. BAKU 0225

Classified By: CDA RICHARD E. HOAGLAND: 1.4 (B), (D)

[1](#)1. SBU) Charge met with Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov for a half hour on March 31. Several issues are reported separately.

#### THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

[1](#)2. (C) Noting this was the first opportunity they had to speak since Coordinator for Eurasian Energy Diplomacy Ambassador Steven Mann visited Ashgabat February 28 (reftel), Charge asked for Meredov's evaluation of the status of the bilateral relationship and what he would see as next steps. Meredov replied, drawing out each word, "Yes, we need to analyze this carefully. We need to see. Let me think about this carefully. We can talk about it later."

#### AZERBAIJAN

[1](#)3. (C) Charge noted he has had good reports about Meredov's early March visit to Baku and asked for his evaluation of the Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan relationship. Meredov said Turkmenistan has just named its ambassador to Azerbaijan, and he will, in fact, arrive this week to reopen the Turkmen embassy. He added, "Azerbaijan, after all, is a neighbor, and we have to have normal relations." Charge asked if Meredov thought there was a possibility that President Ilham Aliyev might visit Ashgabat in the first half of this year. Meredov responded, "The relationship is developing with its own dynamic." Charge reminded Meredov the United States stands ready to help with the Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan relationship. We can use quiet diplomacy if that would be helpful, or, if Turkmenistan prefers, we can keep our distance. Meredov replied, "Understood."

#### ASHGABAT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

[1](#)4. (C) Charge briefed Meredov on his March 26 meeting with

Minister of Education Annaamanov and asked if Meredov could help speed up the bureaucratic process of registering the Ashgabat International School (reftel A). Meredov said he would call the Minister of Justice to try to speed up the process and added, "We will bring this to conclusion."

#### TURKMENBASHI AMERICAN CORNER

15. (C) Charge asked what can be done to get permission to reopen the American Corner in the Caspian port city of Turkmenbashi. Meredov replied he had appreciated the Charge's proposal in January to form a working group to resolve "the real estate question." He said he would place a few phone calls to see where things stand because he would like to bring this, too, to conclusion. "In our lifetime?" the Charge asked. For the first time in the meeting, Meredov cracked a smile.

16. (C) COMMENT: This was not the Meredov we had come to know. Whereas he had been expansive, even if usually didactic in the past, this time he was terse. In the short meeting, he took off his glasses three times to rub his eyes, and he kept vibrating his right leg almost like a nervous tic, something we had not observed him do before. We note the relationship with Meredov was essentially normal until almost the end of February. It is too early to draw any firm conclusions, but we note President Putin had a long, unscheduled pull-aside with President Berdimuhamedov during the CIS Informal Summit on February 21 (reftel C). We would like to know what was discussed. END COMMENT.  
HOAGLAND